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# General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-first Session

33rd plenary meeting
Monday, 14 October 1996, 10 a.m. (closed)
New York

*President*: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

**Agenda item 17**

**Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections**

**(b) Election of twenty members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination**

**Note by the Secretary-General (A/51/269)**

**The President:** In accordance with General Assembly decision 42/450 of 17 December 1987, the Assembly elects the members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination upon their nomination by the Economic and Social Council.

The Assembly has before it document A/51/269, which contains the nominations by the Economic and Social Council to fill the vacancies in the Committee that will occur as a result of the expiration on 31 December 1996 of the terms of office of Argentina, Belarus, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, Comoros, the Congo, Cuba, Germany, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Romania, Senegal, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Those States are eligible for immediate re-election.

I should like to remind members that, after 1 January 1997, the following States will still be members of the Committee: the Bahamas, Benin, China, Egypt, France, Ghana, Japan, Mexico, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Togo, the United States of America, Uruguay and Zaire.

Therefore, those 14 States are not eligible in this election.

The following States have been nominated by the Economic and Social Council: four African States for four vacancies — Cameroon, Congo, Nigeria, Zimbabwe; four Asian States for four vacancies — Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, Thailand; four Eastern European States for three vacancies — Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, Ukraine; four Latin American and Caribbean States for four vacancies — Argentina, Brazil, Nicaragua, Trinidad and Tobago; four Western European and other States for five vacancies — Austria, Germany, Netherlands, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Verweij** (Netherlands): I have to inform the Assembly formally that my Government has decided to withdraw the Netherlands candidature for the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

**The President:** The number of States nominated from among the African States, the Asian States, the Latin American and Caribbean States and the Western European and other States is equal to or does not exceed the number of seats to be filled in each of those regions.

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In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, all elections shall be held by secret ballot. However, in accordance with paragraph 16 of decision 34/401, the Assembly may, in elections to subsidiary organs, dispense with secret balloting when the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled.

Taking into account the statement just made by the representative of the Netherlands, may I take it that the Assembly wishes to declare those States nominated by the Economic and Social Council from among the African States, the Asian States, the Latin American and Caribbean States and the Western European and other States — Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Cameroon, the Congo, Germany, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Zimbabwe — elected members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination for a three-year term beginning on 1 January 1997?

*It was so decided.*

**The President:** I congratulate the States that have been elected members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

With regard to the three seats to be filled from among the Eastern European States, the number of candidates nominated exceeds the number of vacancies allocated to this region. Therefore, the Assembly will now proceed to a vote by secret ballot to elect three members from the Eastern European States.

In accordance with the rules of procedure, the required number of candidates that receives the largest number of votes and not less than the majority will be declared elected.

In case of a tie vote for the last seat, there will be a restricted ballot limited to those candidates that have obtained an equal number of votes.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to that procedure?

*It was so decided.*

**The President:** Ballot papers for the Eastern European States will now be distributed.

The voting process has begun.

Only the following four States nominated by the Economic and Social Council are eligible: Bulgaria, Poland, Romania and Ukraine. I should like to stress that only the names of three of those States should be written on the ballot paper.

I request representatives to use only the ballot papers that are being distributed and to write the names of the three States for which they wish to vote. Ballot papers containing more than three names will be declared invalid. Names of ineligible States appearing on a ballot paper shall not be counted at all.

*At the invitation of the President, Miss Montaño-Duran (Bolivia), Miss Miller (Malta) and Mr. Seaton (South Africa) acted as tellers.*

*A vote was taken by secret ballot.*

*The meeting was suspended at 10.30 a.m. and resumed at 11.05 a.m.*

**The President:** The result of the voting is as follows:

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| Number of ballot papers: | 160 |
| Number of invalid ballots: | 0 |
| Number of valid ballots: | 160 |
| Abstentions: | 0 |
| Number of Members voting: | 160 |
| Required majority: | 81 |
| Number of votes obtained: | |
| Poland | 131 |
| Romania | 127 |
| Ukraine | 125 |
| Bulgaria | 89 |

*The following States, having obtained the required majority and the largest number of votes, were elected members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination for a three-year term beginning on 1 January 1997: Poland, Romania and Ukraine.*

**The President:** I congratulate the States that have just been elected members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, and I thank the tellers for their assistance in the election.

The following 18 States have thus been elected members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination for a three-year term beginning on 1 January 1997: Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Cameroon, Congo,

Germany, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Zimbabwe.

Regarding the two remaining vacancies from among the Western European and other States, the General Assembly will be in a position to act on them upon the nomination by the Economic and Social Council of two Member States from that region.

I therefore propose that the Assembly keep this sub-item on the agenda of the fifty-first session. May I take it that the Assembly agrees to that proposal?

*It was so decided.*

**The President:** We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 17.

**Agenda item 98**

**Operational activities for development**

**Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/256)**

**The President:** The General Assembly will now consider the report of the Secretary-General on the progress at mid-decade on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/217 on the World Summit for Children, which has been issued as document A/51/256.

I call on the Secretary-General.

**The Secretary-General:** The World Summit for Children was held six years ago in this building. Six member States — Canada, Egypt, Mali, Mexico, Pakistan and Sweden — convened that important meeting, with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) serving as secretariat. Seventy-one Heads of State or Government and 88 ministerial representatives participated, making it the largest gathering of world leaders held up until then. It was the first truly global summit conference in history, inaugurating the series of major international development conferences of the 1990s and our collective assault on poverty.

At the World Summit for Children, the high expectations of the international community immediately following the end of the cold war were translated into commitments to children. The participants pledged to achieve seven major goals and 20 supporting goals relating to the survival, health, nutrition, education and protection of children by the year 2000. The General Assembly, in its resolution 45/217 of 21 December 1990, urged the international community to work together to achieve them.

What can we say six years later? Are the promises made to children in 1990 being kept? How have the world's children fared?

The findings in the report, contained in document A/51/256, on the progress that has been made since the World Summit for Children are on the whole a cause for celebration — and we did just that two weeks ago in the Trusteeship Council Chamber on the sixth anniversary of the Summit, with the participation of children, the President of the General Assembly, representatives of the initiating countries, the Executive Director of UNICEF and others. It is not often that we are able to report global breakthroughs in the field of development, so we are particularly encouraged that we now can point to considerable and widespread progress for children, who are our collective future.

Although there is considerable variation across countries and regions, information we have from 90 countries suggests an encouraging trend towards the achievement of the majority of the goals for children in most countries. The greatest progress has been in the control of preventable diseases. Immunization continues to reach approximately 80 per cent of all children before their first birthday, now saving 3 million young children every year. Polio has been eradicated from large parts of the world and, with continued effort, this scourge should go the way of smallpox by the year 2000. Major progress has been made towards the elimination of neonatal tetanus. Guinea worm disease, which sapped the energies of millions of people only five years ago, is now on the verge of elimination, having declined by 97 per cent. There has been dramatic improvement in home management of diarrhoea, the second leading cause of child deaths. The use of oral rehydration therapy has doubled over the past five years and is now saving the lives of some 1 million children every year. Some 1.5 billion more people are consuming iodized salt today than in 1990, preventing the largest single cause of preventable mental retardation in children. Vitamin A supplementation and fortification to prevent blindness and immune-system damage to young children is up in many countries. Access to safe water has improved considerably. Some 82 per cent of all primary-school-age children are now enrolled.

These would be formidable achievements in any circumstances, but the fact that so much progress has been made in a period of unprecedented population growth, proliferating conflicts, widening gaps between rich and poor and cutbacks in government budgets and development assistance attests to the increased importance of children on the international agenda. It demonstrates the effectiveness of the strategies and low-cost interventions being used to improve children's lives.

Member States should feel encouraged by this performance. I am proud that the United Nations — whose work in development often goes underreported and unrecognized — has been able to make such an important contribution. And I want to take this opportunity to recognize and commend the leadership role that UNICEF has played in this United Nations success story. UNICEF will continue to play an indispensable role in the future.

The children who spoke at the Summit commemoration two weeks ago warned us, however, against self-satisfaction. They spoke with deep emotion on behalf of their sisters and brothers throughout the world, who are still being bypassed by progress. And the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Bellamy, reminded us that progress made to date must be sustained and that special efforts will be needed to accelerate progress in areas where results have been disappointing to date.

Child mortality, while declining, is still being reduced too slowly to reach the year 2000 goal. New estimates show that maternal mortality is a bigger problem than was previously thought. There has been little or no improvement in child malnutrition. The quality of basic education leaves much to be desired, resulting in high drop-out rates, particularly for girls. Safe drinking-water supply has not kept pace with population growth, especially in cities, and progress in providing adequate sanitation has lagged even more. Millions of children continue to lose their childhoods on battlefields and streets, in prostitution and sweatshops.

In presenting this report to the General Assembly, therefore, I want to stress the need to reaffirm the commitments made to children in 1990. The progress I have outlined today must generate greater momentum. We must redouble our efforts to achieve the year 2000 goals, adjusting them where necessary and tailoring the strategies used to achieve them to the realities of each country. Civil societies will have to play a greater role, along with Governments at all levels, if the goals are to be met. Economic and social empowerment of the poor is critically important. Increased investment in basic social services for all, while necessary, will not be sufficient to sustain reductions in poverty. Economic policies aimed at more equal distribution of land, credit and income are also essential. We must increasingly use the Convention on the Rights of the Child — now nearly universal — as a social tool to reach the unreached and to meet the needs and respect the rights of the most disadvantaged, the most vulnerable and the children of minorities suffering under discrimination. Improving the status, well-being and opportunities of girls and women is particularly important.

Follow-up to the World Summit for Children and the other global conferences of this decade needs to be pursued in an integrated fashion, with full United Nations system coordination on the ground. A troubling trend has brought development assistance to its lowest level in a quarter century must be reversed.

The report before the Assembly today tells us what works in development. It tells us that international cooperation is getting measurable results. It tells us that summits and global conferences can make a real difference. It tells us that the twenty-first century can be brighter if we have the political will to put children first. It tells us that investing in children and women is the path to sustainable development.

Children are a prominent feature of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. In addition to addressing this report in plenary and in the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly, members will be discussing the full range of children's rights in the Third Committee and will soon have before them the important report on the impact of armed conflict on children, prepared under the leadership of Mrs. Machel.

Our deliberations here over the coming months can help maintain and accelerate the pace of progress for the world's children. It is my hope that an end-of-decade review will be held in the year 2000 and its results presented to the General Assembly to advance global cooperation on behalf of the world's children into the next century.

**Programme of work**

**The President:** I should like to draw the attention of members to document A/INF/51/3/Rev.1, which contains the revised programme of work of the General Assembly covering the remainder of October and the beginning of November, and which is now available to delegations.

*The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.*